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COUNTRY Greece

SUBJECT Notes on Greek Army Politics

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1. The recent execution of 17 persons is said to be the result of a specific plan originated by Zervas. Preparations were made in the Ministry of Public Order in great secrecy. The execution list named 22 persons, but only 17 were executed, the others having been transferred from the prison on Aegina to other prisons without coming to the attention of the Ministry of Public Order.
 2. The claim of the Communist press, that one of the executions was made in error, is correct. The mistake resulted from a confusion of names, and the person on the list is still alive in another prison. The mistake is attributed to the haste with which the list of names was prepared by the Ministry of Public Order.
 3. The execution squad was comprised of soldiers of the "third category" (suspected Communists), picked from the 500th Battalion commanded by Papadimitropoulos. The execution took place without incident, with an alternate firing squad of nationalist soldiers standing by. A Greek intelligence agency issued the execution report intended for KKE consumption without indicating that the pro-Communist squad had carried out its orders under compulsion.
 4. To win over soldiers from the Communist Party, military authorities have lately invoked the method of signed statements of renunciation of Communism. It is particularly intended for soldiers of the Labor Battalion, and those of the "third category". Many have signed such renunciations, and their names have been published in the press in the areas from which they came. The method is accomplishing favorable results for men who previously belonged to the EAM, EPON and affiliated organizations. It is also resorted to by democrats who have been mistakenly labeled as Communists.
 5. One such declaration of renunciation of Communism, however, has produced doubtful propaganda value. Captain Matsimichelakis, who was being tried on a capital charge at the Lania general court martial, signed a renunciation, and included a statement that he had never belonged to the Communist Party. Actually, Matsimichelakis was a member and played an important role as an intelligence agent of the Party during the occupation and after

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the liberation. He had penetrated several nationalist organizations in this line of work.

6. Several cliques have been noted among the higher rank officers of the Greek Army. In the order of their importance, they are the Ventiris clique, the Taskalotos clique, and the less important Maniadaakis clique. For example, Taskalotos is followed by a regular retinue to whatever staff position he is assigned. The retinue is comprised of several officers including Karademis, Katsademis and Tzinas. Taskalotos is also making an effort to win over the officers of the Sacred Company and the Rimini Brigade.
7. The two Stratos appointments are looked upon as successes of the Minister of War against Ventiris in the jealousy that exists between them. One of these appointments, General Perivoliotis, has been placed in the staff to supervise personnel matters, replacing General Balis. Perivoliotis, who is regarded as honest and capable, has openly advised his assistants not to hesitate to recommend competent officers for appropriate positions, regardless of politics or connections. Similarly, General Papadopoulos, present commander of the First Corps, is not considered a hireling of Ventiris. The clear stand of Sofoulis against the KKE has been attributed in part to the frequent visits of Sofoulis by Ventiris during the last month.
8. In the absence of competent senior officers, four groupings, consisting of 10 LOK companies each, are presently commanded by Majors. Generally, these units are considered as specially selected, from a viewpoint of morale and effectiveness. The officers connected with these units have been privately informed, however, that Ventiris expects shortly to replace them with officers belonging to his own clique. In other words, Kalinsky, Triantafyllakos, Demopoulos would be replaced by Papadopoulos, Mesinopoulos and Papageorgakopoulos.
9. Corps Commander Papageorgiou recently visited the units stationed at Verria. In his address to the officers, he told them to execute any rebels surrendering at the last minute, and that they could consider this an oral order.

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